

Message Text

SECRET

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41

ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 /026 W
----- 024062

O R 281110Z MAR 75
FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6069
INFO AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
AMEMBASSY AMMAN

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 TEL AVIV 1809

EXDIS

FOR ASSISTANT SECRETARY ATHERTON

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, US, IS
SUBJ: ISRAELI DESIRE TO RESTRICT ACTIVITIES OF CONGEN
JERUSALEM ON WEST BANK

REFS: JERUSALEM 701, 702, 704

1. ON MARCY 35 EVRON (MFA) RAISED WITH DCM ALLEGED COMMENTS MADE BY CONGEN COMMERCIAL OFFICER NASTOFF BEFORE RAMALLAH CHAMBER OF COMMERCE. HE NOTED THESE REMARKS HAD BEEN CARRIED IN THE ARAB PRESS AND THIS LED TO SUBSEQUENT WIDESPREAD INTEREST ON PART OF HEBREW PRESS AND STUDY OF SUBJECT BY GOI.

2. HE SAID THAT HE HAD RAISED SUBJECT IN PASSING WITH ASSISTANT SECRETARY ATHERTON IN JERUSALEM LAST WEEK BUT HAD REFRAINED FROM RAISING IT OFFICIALLY WITH EMBASSY UNTIL HE WAS ABLE TO GET CONFIRMATION OF REMARKS MADE BY CONGEN OFFICER. HE NOW HAD CONFIRMATION AND WISHED TO PASS ON GOI REQUEST THAT IN FUTURE ALL CONTACTS BY CONGEN OFFICERS WITH WEST BANK ARAB OFFICIALS BE ARRANGED THROUGH THE MILITARY GOVERNMENT.

3. DCM NOTED THAT PRESS REPORTS OF ALLEGED REMARKS WERE DISTORTION AND THAT CONSUL GENERAL HAD FLATLY DENIED NASTOFF HAD MADE ANY REMARKS WHICH COULD BE INTERPRETED AS BEING
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POLITICAL IN NATURE. FURTHERMORE, NASTOFF'S REMARKS

CONCERNING TRADE PROMOTION WERE STANDARD FARE. IN PARTICULAR, IT WAS NORMAL PRACTICE FOR A COMMERCIAL OFFICER TO ADVISE IMPORTERS TO CONTACT AMERICAN FIRMS IN THE US DIRECTLY. GIVEN THE FACTS IN THE MATTER, DCM SUGGESTED THAT GOI MIGHT WISH TO WITHDRAW ITS "REQUEST."

4. EVRON REPLIED THAT WHAT WAS "NORMAL IN TOKYO" WAS IMPROPER AND PERHAPS EVEN DANGEROUS IN PLACES LIKE WEST BANK UNDER CURRENT CIRCUMSTANCES. NEVERTHELESS, HE AGREED TO CONSIDER CONVERSATION AS UNOFFICIAL AND OFF THE RECORD TO BE CONTINUED THE NEXT DAY AFTER FURTHER REFLECTION.

5. ON MARCH 26, EVRON READ TO DCM HEBREW TRANSLATION OF ORIGINAL NOTES IN ARABIC (THE ARABIC NOTES WERE ON RAMALLAH CHAMBER OF COMMERCE STATIONARY). ACCORDING TO THESE NOTES, SEVERAL TIMES DURING NASTOFF'S PRESENTATION, ARAB BUSINESSMEN PRESENT ASKED NASTOFF TO DISCUSS POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS OF SUGGESTIONS THAT ARAB BUSINESSMEN DEAL DIRECTLY WITH US FIRMS, BYPASSING ISRAELI AGENTS. SAME RECORD ALSO SHOWS THAT ON EACH OCCASION NASTOFF DECLINED TO DISCUSS POLITICS, CONFINING HIS REMARKS TO HOPE THAT SECRETARY KISSINGER'S LATEST VISIT TO MID EAST WOULD LEAD TO ANOTHER SIGNIFICANT STEP TOWARD REAL PEACE (OR SOMETHING LIKE THIS). AT ONE POINT, NASTOFF WAS QUOTED AS ENCOURAGING WEST BANKERS TO BELIEVE THAT SIGNIFICANT INVESTMENT AND DEVELOPMENT FUNDS WOULD BE FORTHCOMING IN THE AREA.

6. DCM NOTED THAT OBVIOUSLY NASTOFF WAS MISQUOTED AS CONCERNS AVAILABILITY OF LARGE-SCALE AID AND INVESTMENT FUNDS FROM US SOURCES AND THAT REST OF RECORD BEARS OUT FACT THAT NASTOFF KEPT AWAY FROM TROUBLESOME POLITICAL ISSUES. THIS, PLUS DENIAL BY PRESIDENT OF RAMALLAH CHAMBER OF COMMERCE RE ALLEGATIONS WHICH APPEARED IN MARCH 25 ISRAELI PRESS, PLUS APPARENT SATISFACTION ON PART OF DIRECTOR OF ISRAEL-AMERICAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE RE EXPLANATION RECEIVED FROM CONGEN (REF A), CLEARLY INDICATED THAT THIS WAS MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING.

7. EVRON REPLIED THAT THIS WAS NOT THE CASE; THIS INCIDENT MADE GOI EVEN MORE CONSCIOUS OF PROBLEMS OF MISINTERPRETED SIGNALS AND EVEN UNINTENDED SIGNALS IN VOLATILE WEST BANK
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SITUATION. EVEN CONCEDED NASTOFF'S REMARKS WERE MISINTERPRETED (EVRON EMPHASIZED NASTOFF'S INTENTIONS WERE NOT IN DOUBT), GOI BELIEVED THAT PROPENSITY OF WEST BANKERS TO HEAR WHAT THEY FIND PLEASING IS MAJOR PROBLEM AND GOI BELIEVED IT NECESSARY TO MINIMIZE POSSIBILITIES FOR SUCH PROBLEMS. UNDER CIRCUMSTANCES, HE SAID GOI BELIEVED IT BEST FOR AN UNSPECIFIED PERIOD TO GO BACK TO SITUATION WHICH OBTAINED AFTER 1967 WAR FOR PERIOD OF SOME TIME "BEFORE ISRAEL

LIBERALIZED" ITS POLICIES. EVRON NOTED THAT THIS EARLIER POLICY HAD APPROVAL OF AMBASSADOR BARBOUR (AND PRESUMABLY OF USG). EVRON THEN GOT TO THE BOTTOM LINE: GOI REQUESTS THAT IN THE FUTURE OUR CONSUL GENERAL IN JERUSALEM CONFINE ITSELF TO CONSULAR MATTERS AND TO CONTACTS WITH UNOFFICIAL WEST BANKERS. CONTACTS WITH WEST BANK OFFICIALS IN ANY CAPACITY SHOULD BE MADE BY THE EMBASSY FOR AN APPROPRIATE EMBASSY OFFICER THROUGH THE FOREIGN MINISTRY.

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
----- 024125

O R 281110Z MAR 75
FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
TO SECSTATE WASHC IMMEDIATE 6070
INFO AMKONSUL JERUSALEM 6348
AMEMBASSY AMMAN

S E C R E T SECTION 2 OF 2 TEL AVIV 1809

EXDIS

FOR ASSISTANT SECRETARY ATHERTON

8. DCM NOTED THAT HE HAD DISCUSSED THIS MATTER WITH AMBASSADOR KEATING AND WAS AUTHORIZED TO TELL EVRON THAT AMBASSADOR CONSIDERED ANY GOI ATTEMPT TO IMPOSE SUCH RESTRICTIVE POLICY AS VERY UNWISE. AMBASSADOR BELIEVED THAT SUCH ACTION ON PART OF ISRAELIS WOULD INEVITABLY BECOME PUBLICLY KNOWN AND, INTER ALIA, WOULD RESULT IN HIGHLY UNFAVORABLE COMPARISON WITH CONTROLS DICTATORSHIPS AND OTHER AUTHORITATIVE REGIMES PUT ON CONTACTS BETWEEN FOREIGN DIPLOMATS AND PERSONS UNDER THEIR CONTROL. FINALLY, THE AMBASSADOR WONDERED IF THE GOI REALLY WISHED TO BURDEN US-ISRAELI RELATIONS WITH THIS KIND OF A PROBLEM AT THIS TIME.

9. IN REPLY, EVRON STATED THAT AFTER YESTERDAY'S CONVERSATION HE HAD A LONG MEETING WITH GENERAL VARDI, THE ADMINISTRATOR OF THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES, DURING WHICH THEY

CONSIDERED THE PROBLEM FROM ALL ASPECTS, INCLUDING, OF COURSE, THE PUBLIC RELATIONS ASPECT WHICH WE MENTIONED. THEY CAME TO THE CONCLUSION THAT UNDER CIRCUMSTANCES, AT LEAST FOR THE "CURRENT PERIOD," ISRAEL HAD TO INTRODUCE THE RESTRICTIVE POLICY WHICH HE DESCRIBED. IN ANSWER TO A QUESTION, HE SAID THAT THIS WAS BY NO MEANS A POLICY AIMED AT THE US ALONE, BUT THAT ALL OTHER CONSULATES IN JERUSALEM WERE GOING TO BE PUT UNDER THE SAME WRAPS RE CONTACTS WITH WEST BANK OFFICIALS. HE ALSO ADDED THAT THIS POLICY HAD "SUPPORT"

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OF MINISTERS ALLON AND PERES.

10. DCM EXPRESSED REGRET THAT GOI INSISTED ON PRESSING ILL-CONSIDERED "REQUEST" AND NOTED IT WOULD BE REPORTED TO WASHINGTON. EVRON SAID THAT DINITZ WAS BEING INFORMED, BUT MFA EXPECTED TO DEAL WITH MATTER IN JERUSALEM WITH EMBASSY.

11. COMMENT: CONGEN FILES (JERUSALEM WILL BE REPORTING MORE FULLY) SHOW THAT IN EARLY POST-1967 WAR PERIOD, CONSULAR OFFICERS AS WELL AS ALL OTHER NON-RESIDENTS OF WEST BANK CARRIED ISRAELI PASSES FOR TRAVEL INTO THAT AREA. CONGEN REPORTS MAKE QUITE EVIDENT, HOWEVER, THAT EVEN AT THAT EARLY TIME CONGEN OFFICERS WERE CARRYING ON FREELY THEIR CONTACTS WITH WEST BANK OFFICIALS. NEITHER WE NOR CONGEN ARE AWARE OF POLICY THAT CONGEN "CONFINE ITSELF TO CONSULAR MATTERS AND TO CONTACTS WITH UNOFFICIAL WEST BANKERS." REQUIREMENT THAT WEST BANK OFFICIALS BE DEALT WITH BY EMBASSY IS ALMOST CERTAINLY NEW. WE ARE NOT AWARE THAT ANY OTHER EMBASSY HAS BEEN APPROACHED WITH SIMILAR "REQUEST," BUT ASSUME WE WILL BE CONTACTED BY INTERESTED MISSIONS IF AND WHEN SUCH CONTACT IS MADE BY GOI.

12. I FIND IT DIFFICULT TO BELIEVE THAT THE NASTOFF AFFAIR IS THE REAL CAUSE OF THIS "REQUEST." RATHER, IT STRIKES ME AS A PRETEXT TO TRY TO HEAD OFF ANY PLANS WE MIGHT HAVE FOR INCREASED US RELATIONS WITH WEST BANKERS THROUGH INSTRUMENTALITIES OTHER THAN THE GOI. IN THIS RESPECT, EVRON REFERRED BRIEFLY TO FACT THAT GOI WAS CONCERNED ABOUT AND CURRENTLY STUDYING IMPLICATIONS OF PROPOSED UTILIZATION OF \$5 MILLION OF "SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS FUND" FOR USE IN WEST BANK AND GAZA. IT SHOULD ALSO BE NOTED THAT DCM TOLD EVRON THAT AS HE UNDERSTOOD REQUEST, GOI WAS ATTEMPTING TO USE EMBASSY TO CONVEY A PRETTY POTENT SIGNAL TO WEST BANKERS SUGGESTING CHANGE IN USG POLICY TOWARD GOI OCCUPATION OF AREA, A CHANGE WHICH HAD NOT IN FACT TAKEN PLACE. EVRON ALLOWED AS HOW SUCH A SIGNAL COULD BE TRANSMITTED BUT CLAIMED THAT WAS NOT PURPOSE OF "REQUEST".

13. WE PROMISED TO REPORT "REQUEST" TO WASHINGTON BUT CAREFULLY AVOIDED CONVEYING ANY IMPRESSION THAT US MIGHT

BE PREPARED TO COMPLY WITH "REQUEST." IN FACT, WE ALSO
CAREFULLY AVOIDED ADDRESSING SUBJECT OF IF OR WHEN EMBASSY MIGHT
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REPLY TO "REQUEST."

14. IT IS POSSIBLE THAT GOI DEMARCHE WAS MADE AT EVRON-DCM
LEVEL DELIBERATELY TO FLOAT TRIAL BALLOON TO GAUGE OUR REACTION.
FACT ISRAELIS HAVE SO FAR KEPT THIS IN LESS FORMAL "ORAL"
CATEGORY MIGHT SUGGEST THAT MINISTERIAL "SUPPORT" CITED IS
NOT SAME AS MINISTERIAL "DECISION."

15. I ASSUME DEPARTMENT AGREES ISRAELI "REQUEST" IS UNWISE
AND SHOULD NOT BE COMPLIED WITH. IF SO, I THINK BEST COURSE OF
ACTION WOULD BE FOR ME TO DISCUSS MATTER SOON WITH FORMIN ALLON
IN HOPES ISRAELIS WILL BACK OFF. PLEASE ADVISE ASAP. IN A FEW
DAYS WE WILL BE INUNDATED WITH CONGRESSIONAL VISITORS AND I
WOULD LIKE TO SEE ALLON BEFORE THE FLOOD STARTS.

16. CONSUL GENERAL DAY HAS SEEN THIS MESSAGE, CONCURS
AND WILL ALSO BE COMMENTING SEPARATELY.
KEATING

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Message Attributes

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